

Principal: Mrs S O'Doherty  
Tel: Junior School 71382765  
Senior School 71382422



St Mary's Primary School  
43/48 Melmount Road  
STRABANE  
BT82 9EF



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9<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Parent / Guardian

## **Full day of strike action by all education workers on 18 January 2024**

I am writing to you about forthcoming strike action by the five teaching unions in Northern Ireland. You may have seen coverage of this in the news, and I wanted to inform you about the impact this is likely to have at our school.

### **Why?**

- Education in Northern Ireland has been systematically defunded in recent years, resulting in decimating reductions in support, resource and capacity.
  - The teaching profession has filled in the growing gaps, holding the fragmenting system together and protecting children from the impact of the cuts.
  - Pay paralysis, when set alongside the working conditions of the teaching profession in Northern Ireland, is having a devastating impact on the profession, with clear evidence that we will not be able to recruit or retain teachers and school leaders in the future if these issues are not resolved. Education is in crisis.
- Other public sector workers in Northern Ireland have also received pay increases during this time. • Teachers across the UK and Ireland have received their normal pay increases, several times over the last three years. Teachers in Northern Ireland have received nothing.
  - All five teaching unions have been in dispute for over a year, during which time no offer has been made.
  - During this year of dispute, action has been gradually escalated, in the hope that an offer of resolution would be forthcoming.
  - Taking strike action is the last resort. This could have been avoided and, indeed, can still be avoided.
  - The responsibility to resolve this dispute lies squarely with the employing authorities and the Department of Education.

When a strike takes place, those taking strike action stop work and withdraw their labour. Everyone involved in the action will, therefore, not teach class(es) or undertake any other duties on the strike day.

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## How will strike action affect St.Mary's Primary School?

A risk assessment has been conducted which considers and I as the Principal in consultation with the Board of Governors have determined:

### **The whole school will be closed to ALL pupils on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Clearly this is a difficult situation, which will cause disruption. I would ask you, however, to be understanding. This is a very unusual circumstance and is the direct result of the failure to take into account the very real concerns expressed by teachers and school leaders. Taking strike action is not something that anyone would undertake lightly. Those on strike will have thought long and hard about their decision and will also lose pay for the period that they are on strike.

Should the circumstances around this planned strike change the school will notify you immediately.

The responsibility to resolve this dispute lies squarely with the Department of Education and our local government. To make your feelings known about the damage that is being done to our schools, the teaching profession and, of course, our children, you can write directly the following people, in addition to your own local political representatives:

**Sara Long, CEO: Education Authority**, 40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1  
[sara.long@eani.org.uk](mailto:sara.long@eani.org.uk)

**Eve Bremner, CEO: CCMS**, Linen Hill House, 23 Linenhall Street, Lisburn, BT28  
1FJ [eve.bremner@ccmsschools.com](mailto:eve.bremner@ccmsschools.com)

**Maria Thomasson, Acting CEO**, CnaG, Áras na bhFál, 200-202 Falls Road, Belfast,  
BT12 6AH [mariathomasson@comhairle.org](mailto:mariathomasson@comhairle.org)

**Roisin Marshall, CEO: NICIE**, 25 College Gardens, Belfast, BT9 6BS  
[rmarshall@nicie.org.uk](mailto:rmarshall@nicie.org.uk)

**Nuala O'Neill, Director: Governing Bodies Association**, Fountain Centre, Belfast,  
BT1 6ET [nuala@gbani.org](mailto:nuala@gbani.org)

**Mark Bailie, Director of Workforce: DENI**, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor,  
Co Down, BT19 [mark.bailey@education-ni.gov.uk](mailto:mark.bailey@education-ni.gov.uk)

**Mark Browne, Permanent Secretary: DENI**, Rathgael House, Balloo Road,  
Bangor, Co Down, BT19 [mark.browne@education.-ni.gov.uk](mailto:mark.browne@education.-ni.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Rorty

PRINCIPAL